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JAVANESE LANGUAGE MODALITY IN BLENCONG ARTICLES OF SUARA MERDEKA NEWSPAPER

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Abstract

Many languages have modalities which are usually expressed through certain modal verbs. By analyzing the modal verbs, the varying degrees of commitment to or belief in a proposition can be explained. Javanese language also has such modal system. This paper examines the modality in Javanese language used in Blencong articles of Suara Merdeka newspaper. The articles contain opinions towards many issues from the view of Javanese people and Javanese wisdom. This paper is aimed to find out the modalities realized in modal verbs in Blencong articles and to describe the functions of such modal verbs. The data were collected from Blencong articles downloaded from the online version of Suara Merdeka newspaper. They were then analyzed by using translational (identity) method. The result shows that the writers of the articles use epistemic modality to show their certainty and uncertainty about any issue, deontic modality to show their attitude towards obligation, dynamic modality to express one's ability, and intentional modality to express the writers' wish, willingness, and hope. The modal verbs used are *mesthi*, *pancen*, *mesthine*, *bakal*, *arep*, *kudu*, *kudune*, *dititahke*, *bisa*, *bisaa*, *mbokmenawa*, and *muga-muga*.

Key words: Javanese language, modality, modal verbs

1. Introduction

Modality is a category of linguistic meaning that has to do with the expression of possibility and necessity. According to Saeed (2000:125), modality is a cover term for devices which allow speakers to express varying degrees of commitment to, or belief in, a proposition. Many languages have modalities which are usually expressed through certain modal verbs. Hence, by analyzing the modal verbs, such varying degrees of commitment to or belief in a proposition can be explained.

In English, the modal verbs are used to express ideas such as possibility, intention, obligation and necessity. Some examples of English modal verbs are *can*, *could*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, *ought to*, *dare*, and *need* (<http://www.usingenglish.com/glossary/modal-verb.html>). Typical modal verbs in English articulate possibility or necessity. Verbs such as *may* or *might* are used to suggest that the speaker is possibly going to do something but hasn't quite committed to the action yet. The statement *I might go to the movies* is different from the statement *I am going to the movies*. The former denotes that the speaker is expressing the possibility of going to see a movie, and the latter demonstrates that the speaker expresses the decided intent of her action to see a movie. The modal verb *might* or in variant form *may* helps qualify and modify the verb *go* (<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-modal-verb.htm>). In Indonesian language, modality can be expressed by using auxiliary words such as *akan* (*Besok Ali akan datang* 'Ali will come tomorrow') and *harus* (*Besok Ali harus datang* 'Ali must come tomorrow'), adverbs such as *seharusnya* (*Besok seharusnya Ali datang* 'Ali should come tomorrow') and *barangkali* (*Besok barangkali Ali datang* 'Ali may come tomorrow'), or clauses such as *saya kira* (*Saya kira Ali besok datang* 'I think that Ali will come tomorrow') (Alwi, 1990:3). Javanese language also has such modal system. The modal verbs used among other are *saged*, *bisa*, *mengkogek*, *bakal*, *kudu*, *pancen*, *mungkin* (Klok, 2008 and Gustianingsih, 2008), each of which expresses different meaning and category.

This paper examines the modality in Javanese language in Suara Merdeka newspaper. As a leading and a Javanese community-centered newspaper in Central Java, Suara Merdeka maintains the local culture by providing a special page in its Sunday edition called Blencong. The page uses Javanese language and contains opinions towards many issues from the view of Javanese people and Javanese wisdom. This paper is aimed to find out the modalities realized in modal verbs in Blencong articles and to describe the functions of such modal verbs. The data were gathered randomly from the online version of Suara Merdeka newspaper at <http://suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/kejawen>. The modal verbs were then classified and analyzed by using translational (identity) method, that is, by applying other languages as determiners (Sudaryanto, 1993:14-15).

2. Modality

Modal systems enable speakers to signal stronger and weaker commitment to the factuality of statements (Saeed, 2000:125). There are broad categories of modality, there are differences in the ways where modalities are classified. Von Wright (in Lillian, 2008:3 and Alwi, 1990:28) suggests 4 types of modality, they are alethic or modality of truth (necessary, possible, contingent, impossible), epistemic or modality of knowing (verified, undecided, falsified), deontic or modality of obligation (obligatory, permitted, indifferent, forbidden), and existential or modality of existence (universal, existing, empty). Von Wright also mentions dynamic modality which is concerned with ability, as expressed by *can* in 'John can speak German'. On the other hand, Palmer (1986:18) focuses on epistemic and deontic modalities, following Lyons and Jespersen. Jespersen draws the distinction between the two sets 'containing an element of will' and 'not containing an element of will' which closely corresponds with Lyons' reference to 'the speaker's opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes.' Using von Wright's terms, Lyons then identifies two kinds of modality: 'epistemic modality which is concerned with matters of knowledge, belief, or opinion rather than fact; and deontic modality, which is concerned with the necessity or possibility of acts by morally responsible agents.'

Meanwhile Fintel (2006, <http://mit.edu/fintel/www/modality.pdf>) describes the types of modality as follows. Epistemic modality deals with what is possible or necessary given what is known and what the available evidence is. Deontic modality relates to what is possible, necessary, permissible, or obligatory, given a body of law or a set of moral principles or the like. Dynamic modality concerns with what is possible or necessary, given a particular set of circumstances. Alethic modality concerns what is possible or necessary in the widest sense. Alwi (1990:17-18), however, states that the objective truth that becomes the main concern in alethic modality generally describes the speaker's knowledge about a certain proposition. Hence, the truth of the proposition in alethic modality is not based on an inference made by the speaker. This indicates that alethic is not included in the categories of modality. Further he mentions four categories of modality, they are intentional, epistemic, deontic, and dynamic modality.

According to Sudaryanto (in Widhyasmaramurti, 2008:20), modality in Javanese is categorized into three parts. They are *kudu* (really have to), *mesthi* (should have been), and *pancen* (certainly). *Kudu* includes *kena* (can), *entuk* (may), *oleh* (allow), *bisa* (can), *emoh* (unwilling) and *wegah* (unwilling). *Mesthi* consists of *cetha* (obvious) and *sajak* (seem), while *pancen* has *malah* (even) as its member. Meanwhile, Klok (2008:8) focuses on epistemic and deontic modals, arguing that "the Javanese modal system is fully specified; there is a different lexical word for each type of modal".

	Deontic	Epistemic
Universal	<i>Kudu</i>	<i>Mesthi</i>
Existential	<i>Ento', oleh</i>	<i>Mungkin</i>

Table 1: Javanese Modals (Klok, 2008:8)

Klok (2008:6) also adds that "...the type of modal base (epistemic, deontic, circumstantial, etc.) may vary depending on the conversational background." This is illustrated by the same lexical item; the modal verb 'must' in English which may be employed for epistemic context and deontic context.

- a. John **must** be at home. (in view of what I know) EPISTEMIC
- b. John **must** go to school. (in view of the law in Canada) DEONTIC

3. Types and Functions of Javanese Modal Verbs

The analysis reveals that there are four types of modality found in Blencong articles. The findings and the explanation can be seen below.

No	Modality	Meaning	Modal Verbs
1	Epistemic	certainty	<i>mesthi</i> (must), <i>pancen</i> (certainly), <i>mesthine</i> (must have been)
		predictability	<i>bakal</i> (will), <i>arep</i> (will)
		possibility	<i>bisa</i> (can), <i>mbokmenawa</i> (may)
2	Deontic	Order	<i>kudu</i> (must), <i>kudune</i> (should), <i>dititahake</i> (be ordered)
3	Dynamic	ability	<i>bisa</i> (can)

4	Intentional	willingness	<i>bisaa</i> (can)
		Wish	<i>arep</i> (will)
		Hope	<i>muga-muga</i> (hope)

Table 2: Modal Verbs and Meaning

3.1. Epistemic

Epistemic modality concerns with the writer's attitude that is based on his certainty or uncertainty toward a proposition, or in other words, the degree of commitment by the writer to what he says.

a. Certainty

The writers show their certainty through the modal verbs *mesthi* (must), *pancen* (certainly), and *mesthine* (must have been).

▪ **Mesthi (must)**

Kabudayaan Jawa iku perlu diuri-uri supaya lestari lan isih tetep dadi warisan kanggo anak-putu, mung bae kabudayaan mau besuke mesthi wis beda karo kabudayaan Jawa saiki, nanging ora ateges menawa wong Jawa banjur ilang Jawane. (Ilang Jawane)

Javanese culture need to be maintained as a heritage to the next generation. However, in the future the culture must be different from the present culture, however it doesn't mean that Javanese will lose their Java-ness.

▪ **Pancen (certainly)**

Pancen kakean bandha iku murugake ati ora bisa tentrem lan marem. (Wajik Klethik Gula Jawa)

Too much wealth certainly makes the heart insecure.

The modal verbs *mesthi* and *pancen* show that the writer is certain about the propositions. The first data describes that it is necessarily the case that Javanese culture will undergo changes in the future. The second data demonstrates the writer's certainty about the impact of being too wealthy.

▪ **Mesthine (must have been)**

Gusti Allah iku Maha Pengampun, mulane yen manungsa wis ngakoni sakabehing dosa lan kaluputane sarta wis mertobat ora bakal gawe dosa maneh, mesthine ya pinaringan pangapura. (Dosa lan Pangapura)

God is the most merciful, therefore, if a man has confessed all of his sins and mistakes and he has repented that he will not do sinful acts for good, he must have been forgiven.

The modal verb *mesthine* demonstrates that the writer proposes a strong match between his prediction (about forgiveness to a man who has repented) and reality.

b. Predictability

The modal verbs *bakal* and *arep* are used to show the writers' prediction.

▪ **Bakal (will)**

Sapa sing nandur bakal ngunduh. (Dosa lan Pangapura)

He who sows the seeds will harvest the fruit. (One will get the consequences from what he has done).

▪ **Arep (will)**

Wektu iku wayahe wis arep peteng. (Rante Mas)

At that time it was nearly dusk.

Predictability reveals the writers' stronger attitude toward the truth of a proposition than possibility. The sentence containing *bakal* demonstrates the meaning "I (the writer) think that [...]". Hence, the meaning of "*Sapa sing nandur bakal ngunduh*" can be paraphrased into "I believe that he who sows the seeds harvests the fruit." Meanwhile, the second sentence shows habitual circumstance. The modal verb *arep* describes the state at a particular time.

c. Possibility

▪ **Bisa (can)**

Sakabehing pakarti ala lan becik iku ana undhuh-unduhane, bisa ana donya, bisa ana akhirat, bisa uga ditampa atawa disandang dening anak putune. (Dosa lan Pangapura)

All good and bad deeds result in consequences, it can be in the world, in the afterlife, it can also be received by (one's) descendants.

▪ **Mbokmenawa (may)**

Ya mung "Jawane" wong Jawa besuk mbokmenawa wis beda karo "jawane" wong Jawa saiki. (Ilang Jawane)

The "Java-ness" of Javanese people today may be different from that of present Javanese.

The modal verbs *bisa* and *mbokmenawa* present the degree of possibility. Thus, the first sentence shows the possibility of consequences one gets of all deeds he has done in the world while the second sentence shows the possibility of the Java-ness of today's Javanese.

3.2. Deontic

Deontic modality is used to show the writers' attitude towards social factors, in this case, obligation.

Order

- **Dititahke (ordered)**

Thole, Thole, para leluhuring tanah Jawa paring piweling, manungsa dititahake ing alam donya iki dudu supaya ndarbeni milik lan barang sing saya suwe saya luwih akeh, ning supaya uripe saya suwe saya luwih becik. (Rante Mas)

Dear son, the Javanese ancestors reminded us, that men are ordered in this world not to possess things but to make their life better.

- **Kudu (must)**

Yen kepengin duwe dhuwit ya kudu nyambut gawe, yen kepengin pinter ya kudu sekolah utawa sinau. (Jer Basuki Mawa Beya)

If (one) wants to get money he must work, if (he) wants to be smart (he) must go to school or study.

- **Kudune (should)**

Parandene, yen aku isih tetep meksa, kudune aku nglegawa, menawa rasa srakah wis wiwit sumusup ing awakku. (Wajik Klethik Gula Jawa)

(In fact, if I insist, I should realize that greed has permeated inside me.)

The modal verbs *kudu*, *kudune*, and *dititahke* show various degrees of obligation. *Dititahke* signals the strongest statement of obligation, followed by *kudu* and *kudune* which show less strong sense of obligation.

3.3. Dynamic

Ability

- **Bisa (can)**

Tanpa sinau utawa srawung karo padha-padha wong Jawa, ya ora bisa basa Jawa, ora tepung karo kesenian Jawa. (Ilang Jawane)

Without learning or socializing with other Javanese people, (one) can not speak Javanese and (he) doesn't know Javanese art.

The modal verb *bisa* in this sentence illustrates one's ability (or disability) to speak Javanese.

3.4. Intentional

This type of modality functions to express the writers' wish, willingness, and hope.

a. Willingness

- **Bisaa (can)**

Mulane ing sun bakal ngangkah supaya ing sun bisa becik lan tresna marang sapepadaku urip, kang kapetuk marang ing sun, lan kabeh, kang luwih ringkih tinimbang ing sun, ing sun ngangkah bisaa ngayomi lan mitulungi. Lan ing sun ngangkah supaya ing sun bisaa nyipta gagasan kang suci lan resik, bisaa ngucapke tembung kang suci lan resik, bisaa nindakke tindak kang suci lan resik. (Rante Mas)

Therefore I will be determined that I can love and be good to others, and to those who are weaker than I, I am determined that I must be able to protect and help them. I am also determined that I must be able to create pure idea, to speak pure words, to do pure actions.

Bisaa in this sentence signals the speaker's strong intention. This is indicated by the word "ngangkah" which means "be determined".

b. Wish

▪ ***Arep (wish)***

Yen nalika isih aktif biyen yen arep lelungan kudu golek dina libur, sawise pensiun bebas kapan bae bisa. (Pensiunan)

If (one) wants to go on vacation, he has to find a holiday. After retiring, he can go anytime he wants.

The modal verb *arep* shows that the writer's intention to go on a vacation. In this type of modality, the writer is involved in the realization of the event. *Arep* also signals the writer's attitude that deals with controlled non-actual event.

c. Hope

▪ ***Muga-muga (hope)***

Muga-muga plesetan mau ora bener. Iki mung plesetan, kang saliyane kanggo geguyon ya isi pepenget supaya manungsa ora banget-banget dikendhaleni dening dhuwit, utamane ing babagan politik.

I hope the wordplays are not really true. They are only wordplays, which are used as a joke and as a reminder in order that men are not fully controlled by money, especially regarding with political issue. (Dhuwitkrasi)

This type of meaning is signaled by the writer's attitude to an uncontrolled non-actual event. The article discusses about wordplays that are used to distort the meaning of a particular word. Most wordplays discussed in the article have bad meaning, therefore the writer hopes that the wordplays are not true in meaning and that they can be a reminder for people.

4. Conclusion

From the analysis, it can be concluded that the writers of Blencong articles use epistemic modality to show their certainty and uncertainty about any issue, deontic modality to show their attitude towards obligation, dynamic modality to express one's ability, and intentional modality to express the writers' wish, willingness, and hope. It is worth noting that the same modal verbs can express different meaning, depending on the proposition given. Also, the addition of suffixes *-ne* (as in *kudune*), *-a* (*bisaa*) can change the meaning and category of certain modal verbs. This, however, needs further research.

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